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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W
---------- 006024
R 210811Z JUL 75
FM AMEMBASSY CANBERRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6229
INFO AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON
AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY LONDON

S E C R E T CANBERRA 4842

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PORG, AS, RP, TH
SUBJECT: AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL TO DISSOLVE SEATO

REFS: A. STATE 169400; B. CANBERRA 4797; C. STATE 170851

1. SUMMARY: DFA HAS ASSURED ME THAT AUSTRALIANS TAKING NO FURTHER ACTION ON PROPOSAL TO DISSOLVE SEATO (REFTELS), AWAITING OUR CONSIDERED VIEWS. DFA HAS GIVEN EMBOFF DETAILED BACKGROUND TO PROPOSAL PRESENTED TO ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB BY AUSTRALIAN AMBASSADOR SHAW (REF A), WHICH FLESHES OUT HIS PRESENTATION. END SUMMARY.

2. WITH FURTHER REFERENCE TO AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL TO DISSOLVE SEATO (REFTELS) JOHN ROWLAND (DEPUTY SECRETARY, DEPT. OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS) ASSURED ME JULY 21 THAT AUSTRALIANS TAKING NO FURTHER ACTION PENDING RECEIPT OUR CONSIDERED VIEWS WHICH THEY LOOK FORWARD HAVING SOON AS POSSIBLE.

3. MEANWHILE, JOHN BROOK (ASST. SECRETARY, DEFENSE POLICY BRANCH) PHONED EMBOFF AFTERNOON JULY 21 AND ASKED HIM TO CALL FOR DISCUSSION OF AUSTRALIAN PROPOSAL. BROOK SAID FOLLOWING HAD NOT BEEN AVAILABLE IN ANY DETAIL TO
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AMBASSADOR SHAW WHEN HE INITIALLY RAISED SUBJECT IN

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WASHINGTON WITH ASST. SECRETARY HABIB (REF A.) BROOK
ADDED DFA WANTED U.S. TO UNDERSTAND BACKGROUND OF AUSTRALIAN
ACTION.

4. BROOK SAID THERE HAS BEEN GOVERNMENT OF AUSTRALIA
DECISION (APPROVED, IN THIS CASE, BY PRIMIN WHITLAM,
FONMIN WILLESEE, AND DEFMIN MORRISON) TO SEEK TO DISSOLVE
SEATO AS AN ORGANIZATION, BUT NOT RPT NOT SOUTHEAST
ASIA COLLECTIVE DEFENSE TREATY AS SUCH.

5. BROOK WENT THROUGH PRESENT STATUS OF SEATO IN SOME DETAIL,
NOTING IT HAS NOT RPT NOT BEEN VERY EFFECTIVE FOR LONG TIME,
THAT ITS COST DOES NOT RPT NOT JUSTIFY ITS RETURN TO MEMBERS.
MILITARY SIDE OF ORGANIZATION HAS SOME VALUE BUT NOT ENOUGH
TO JUSTIFY CONTINUING WITH PRESENT HEADQUARTERS. SECURITY/
DEVELOPMENT SIDE HAS NOT RPT NOT REALLY FULFILLED HOPES
ORIGINALLY ENTERTAINED FOR IT. ON OTHER HAND, THERE SOME
REAL DISADVANTAGES TO SEATO. IT IS ANACHRONISTIC IN SENSE
THAT IT WAS DEVELOPED IN TOTALLY DIFFERENT POLITICAL AND
STRATEGIC CONTEXT. GOA DOES NOT RPT NOT SEE PRESENT
PROBLEMS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA AS INVOLVING RESISTANCE TO
COMMUNISM SO MUCH AS INVOLVING WAYS TO ACHIEVE INTERNAL
DEVELOPMENT, BALANCE, AND NATIONAL RESILIENCE IN EACH
COUNTRY. PROBLEM IN SOUTHEAST ASIA IS TO ACHIEVE PEACEFUL
AND STABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COUNTRIES IN POAT-VIETNAM
ERA.

6. BROOK SAID THAT GOA REALIZES THAT GOVERNMENT OF PHILIPPINES
(AND ESPECIALLY ROMULO) TENDS TO MAKE STATEMENTS CRITICAL OF
SEATO BUT, WHEN PRESSED, PUTS THESE VIEWS INTO LONGER-
TERM CONTRACT. THAIS PROBABLY DON'T HAVE CONSIDRED
VIEW ON FUTURE OF SEATO, HAVEN'T GIVEN MATTER TOP PRIORITY,
THOUGH THEY MAY BE TRYING TO FORMULATE VIEW AT THIS TIME.
GOA, ACCORDING TO BROOK, WILL BE MUCH INFLUENCED BY
VIEWS OF REGIONAL MEMBERS OF SEATO AND BY US. IN RESPONSE
TO US REQUEST, GOA HAS NOT RPT NOT MADE APPROACH TO
PHILIPPINES AND THAILAND. HOWEVER, AUSTRALIANS PRESENTLY
AT SOME DISADVANTAGE, AS THEY HAVE NOW MADE APPROACHES
TO US, UK AND NEW ZEALAND, AND THEY FELL UNCOMFORTABLE AT
NOT RPT NOT HAVING MADE APPROACH TO THAIS AND PHILS.
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7. IN RESPONSE TO QUESTION, BROOK SAID THAT AUSTRALIAN
MOTIVATION FOR RAISING SUBJECT AT THIS TIME IS FACT THAT
GOP FONSEC ROMULO DISCUSSED FUTURE OF SEATO AT MEETING
WITH FONMIN WILLESEE IN PEKING IN EARLY JUNE, AT WHICH
ROMULO MADE CRITICAL REMARKS ABOUT SEATO AND ITS FUTURE
ROLE. AS TO TIMING OF DISSOLUTION OF SEATO, BROOK SAID
THAT AUSTRALIANS HAVE NOT RPT NOT CONSIDERED THIS ISSUE AT

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ALL. GOA REGARDS MATTER AS POSITION OF PRINCIPLE, AND AUSTRALIANS WOULD LIKE TO SEE PRINCIPLE ACCEPTED FIRST, WITH IMPLEMENTATION TO BE PHASED IN OVER PERIOD OF TIME, IN ACCORDANCE WITH VIEWS OF MEMBERS. HE EMPHASIZED AUSTRALIANS NOT RPT NOT ATTEMPTING TO IMPOSE SOLUTION ON OTHER MEMBERS BUT RATHER ARE SEEKING VIEWS OF OTHER MEMBERS ON CONCEPT OF DISSOLVING SEATO.
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